



Dhamma Giri

Vipassana International Academy
Igatpuri 422 403 Dist. Nashik, Maharashtra
Tel: [91] (2553) 244076, 244086; Fax: [91]
(2553) 244176;
Email: info@giri.dhamma.org; Website:
www.vri.dhamma.org



Mumbai Office: Vipassana Information Centre,
C/o Smita Kamdar, 7C, Suresh Colony, S. V. Road,
Near Nanavati Hospital, Vile Parle (W), Mumbai 400056.
Tel: 022-26178701(2:30 to 5:00 p.m. except Sundays).

Dhamma Giri, meaning 'Hill of Dhamma', is one of the world's largest meditation centres and the main centre of a rapidly growing global Vipassana organization. Situated in Igatpuri, a railway town three hours from Mumbai, Dhamma Giri fulfilled the cherished wish of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, the distinguished Vipassana teacher, to have a full-fledged Vipassana centre in India. With the establishment of Dhamma Giri, the Ganges of Dhamma again began to flow, after millennia, from the country of its origin.

From this once windy, barren plateau with a few ancient ruins and mango trees beneath a mountain-like hilltop, Dhamma Giri has become a unique university of the mind to which people from all over the world are welcomed to be established in the practice and theory of Vipassana.

Dhamma Giri hosted its first ten-day course in October 1976. Goenkaji named the most remote and quiet portion of the 23-acre land as the Shanti Pathar (Plateau of Peace). Construction began on the plateau in January 1978. In March 1979, the central core of the pagoda building was inaugurated, consisting of a central meditation cell for the Principal Teachers and surrounded by concentric rings of cells in which students could meditate individually.

A year later, an adjacent meditation hall to seat 300 people was built. This became the base for a larger hollow pagoda, within which the original pagoda remains intact. This superb Myanmar-style structure rising sixty feet (eighteen meters) with 330 meditation cells is a replica of the famous Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, Myanmar, the country that carefully preserved the Buddha's practical teaching long after it was lost to the rest of the world.

Dhamma Giri serves upto 700 students in each 10-day course. Separate residential blocks are available for Dhamma servers, besides residences for Pali scholars and students of the Vipassana Research Institute. Since December 2004, Dhamma servers have been doing most of the maintenance, cleaning, gardening and house keeping work that was earlier done by paid staff.

The seven Dhamma Halls being used in Dhamma Giri have a total capacity for 930 students. Three Dhamma Halls are used for each ten-day course, with two Dhamma Halls for male students and a separate one for female students. Discourses too are held in separate Dhamma Halls for males and females. Dhamma Halls I and II, which can comfortably seat 350 students each, have an overhead DVD projection system with a 100-inch screen for discourses and Dhamma films.

At least eight assistant teachers, apart from trainee assistant teachers, serve each ten-day course. With the establishment of Dhamma Tapovana for long courses, around 24 ten-day and shorter old students courses are annually held in Dhamma Giri. One or two long courses are held each year.

Besides its busy annual course schedule, Dhamma Giri also co-ordinates assistant teacher scheduling across India, prepares teaching material for Dhamma centres worldwide and hosts annual meetings for teachers and Dhamma servers from around the world.

Serving in Dhamma Giri becomes a beneficial and inspiring challenge to meet the increasing demand for Vipassana in the country of its origin. Around 1500 applications are received for every 10-day course, with the number touching 3,000 during summer vacations. From May 2004 to May 2005, students from 60 countries participated in courses in Dhamma Giri. Every month, around 3,000 visitors answer the call of 'ehi passiko' or 'come and see', including busloads of guests from Mumbai every alternate Sunday.

The growing workload is being routed through greater use of technology. A new Information Centre that is being established with 15 computer terminals will centralize the existing and future computer operations such as course registration, online scheduling for assistant teachers in India, and maintaining a nationwide student database.

Making use of current audio-visual technology, two new modern recording studios have been established in 2005. One studio in the Principal Teachers' residence makes it more convenient for Goenkaji to record new instructions, Dhamma discourses and other programmes requested from the media. A new library and secretariat office in the Principal Teachers' residence also facilitates Goenkaji's work during his stays in Dhamma Giri.

A key development in 2004 was construction of the Myanmar Gate, a grand edifice standing both as a symbol of gratitude to Myanmar for preserving Vipassana and as a combined gateway for Dhamma Giri, Dhamma Tapovana, Sayagi U Ba Khin Village and the Vipassana Research Institute. A boundary wall encircling the entire campus was another important requirement fulfilled.

A self-starting generator and a new water pipeline ease the stretching of resources to serve over 15,000 students on residential courses annually in Dhamma Giri. But the challenges during the year melt in winter during the unique and much-awaited feature of Dhamma Giri: the Teacher's Self-Course when the Dhamma family from all over the world are welcomed to meditate with Goenkaji and Mataji. In 2004, students from 41 countries joyfully participated in the TSC and all had the chance to personally meet and meditate with Goenkaji during the course.

In the serene stillness of dusk during the 6.00 p.m group sitting, Goenkaji and Mataji can sometimes be seen walking in the quiet pathways of Dhamma Giri. As a constant reminder of their selfless Dhamma work to serve all beings, the wind chimes atop the golden pagoda seem to ring the message of liberation from this Hill of Dhamma: bahujana-hit±ya, bahujana-sukh±ya - for the good of many, for the benefit of many.